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**ANNUAL  
TROPHY REPORT**

**Washington  
Wildlife  
Commission**

**1992**



# Washington Wildlife Commission

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Dr. James M. Walton, Vice Chairman, Port Angeles  
Mitch Johnson, Puyallup  
Terry Karro, Winthrop  
John McGlenn, Bellevue  
Norm Richardson, Yakima

The Washington Wildlife Commission consists of six members, each appointed to a six-year term by the governor. Three are from Eastern Washington and three are from Western Washington.

The Commission's primary role is to establish policy and direction for the Department of Wildlife and to monitor the agency's implementation of the goals, policies, and objectives established by the Commission.

The Commission also classifies wildlife for management purposes and establishes the basic rules and regulations governing the taking, sale or possession of wildlife, including time, place, and manner of taking or possessing as well as the species, quantities, sex or size to be taken.

Through regular public meetings and hearings, the Commission provides one of the primary mechanisms for citizens to participate in management of the wildlife resource.



# **Washington Wildlife Commission 1992 Annual Report**

Each year the Washington Wildlife Commission reports to the Governor, the legislature, and the public on the condition of wildlife, wildlife recreational opportunity, and the progress the agency is making toward meeting the Department of Wildlife's basic goals and objectives as established by the Commission. This report encompasses the period October 1991 to September 1992.

## **Condition of Wildlife and Wildlife Resources**

The annual report of the Department of Wildlife provides a complete report of the condition of Washington's wildlife resources. The Commission notes several issues of special interest or concern involving wildlife resources.

- Concern continues to mount for wild steelhead runs on many of Washington's rivers. In response to this growing concern, the Commission adopted more restrictive harvest regulations on several river systems and temporarily closed a few key river systems to steelhead fishing. The Commission, in cooperation with the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and nine private sports conservation groups then assembled a task force to organize a Steelhead Symposium this autumn. This will bring together numerous experts to address the issues of habitat, hatcheries and different harvest management strategies as they affect wild steelhead population and steelhead fishing opportunities in Washington. These species remain of significant concern.
- Threatened and endangered species issues have been high on the agenda of the Commission and the agency



this year. Confirmation of grizzly bear presence in the North Cascades Mountains and of breeding pairs of gray wolf in the North Cascades area has excited many wildlife enthusiasts. The Commission and agency have participated in the northwest regional grizzly bear recovery plan formulation and has incorporated limited hunting restrictions for protection of the newly discovered gray wolf dens in the North Cascade Mountains. Lynx harvest permits have been temporarily halted by the Commission in response to a petition for listing of the lynx as a threatened or endangered species. The Department successfully established new peregrine falcon hacking sites and has been closely monitoring mountain caribou populations. Band-tailed pigeon numbers continue to decline; the Commission has responded with harvest season closures and requests to neighboring states to eliminate harvest until populations achieve some recovery. The Commission does not believe that harvest is the cause of declining populations; however, with numbers so low it appears prudent to manage for maximum survival.

- Wild turkey populations in this state continue to grow and occupy more range. This has allowed the Commission to implement a new and expanded fall turkey season for 1992. Growing numbers of turkey hunters in Washington are enjoying the benefit of successful wild turkey plants in numerous Washington counties; Washington now has good huntable populations of three wild turkey subspecies.

The Commission has requested agency evaluation of possible conflicts in habitat use with native species.



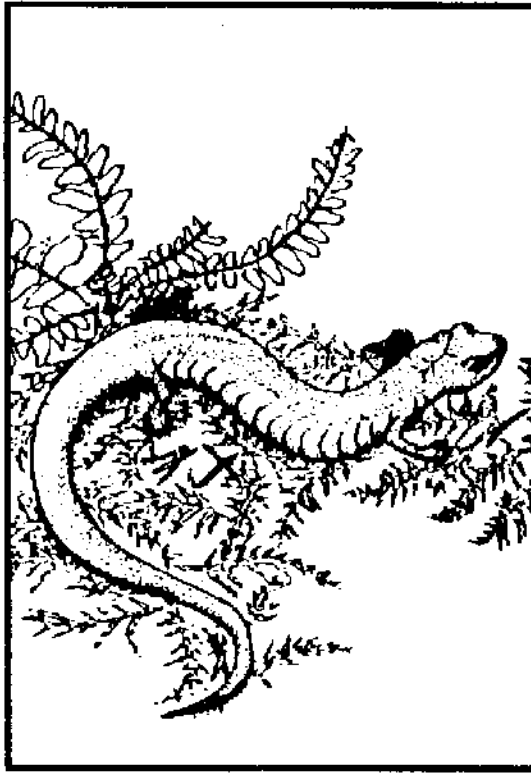
- Cougar populations in the state of Washington appear to be improved. In response, the Commission has increased substantially the number of cougar permits to be issued for 1992-93 hunting season.



- The Department is looking forward to increased upland bird populations in response to the restoration of some wildlife habitats in the agricultural lands in Washington through aggressive implementation of the Ecosystems Conservation Project.
- Growing concern by the Department, shared by wildlife agencies in many Western states and provinces, centers about the threats posed to our state's wildlife populations by many exotic wildlife species, as well as by captive wildlife farming of native species. This concern has led to an agency task force which has been studying this issue carefully for many months. The Commission had presentations by wildlife experts from several states and provinces on the real threat of disease, escape and genetic pollution from these sources, and in response the Commission passed an emergency regulation to designate additional deleterious exotic wildlife species and to limit the threat of game farm operations to our state's wildlife population. The Commission and the agency are holding public meetings throughout the state during the emergency regulation period to better assess the issue prior to consideration of permanent regulations. Experience in many states has shown that some escape from wildlife farms is inevitable, and the threat of disease, habitat competition and cross-breeding is great. These threats generally cannot be reversed, once realized. The Commission has concerns regarding enforcement of existing permanent regulations on deleterious exotic wildlife and of the new emergency regulations recently adopted, and looks for increased enforcement of these rules in the upcoming year. The continued health, abundance and genetic purity of our wildlife populations must be the primary concern of the agency and Commission.







## Wildlife Recreational Opportunity

- Washington State's steady high growth rate continues to erode habitat for wildlife and to increase pressure on public lands for hunting, fishing and wildlife watching. Purchases of land under the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program provide some relief, and the Commission is excited over numerous key

purchases approved in this last year to provide big and small game habitat, to protect important parcels for species of concern, and to assure more lands are available for wildlife recreation activities.

- The Commission recognizes, however, that private lands will continue to provide a significant portion of the necessary wildlife habitat and wildlife recreation opportunity. To the end of improving recreation opportunity on private lands, and preserving important wildlife habitat areas, the Commission formed a Landowner Relations Task Force in 1989 and this year implemented several key program ideas arising out of the task force. The Commission sought and received from the Department's Information and Education Division a new Advanced Hunter Education Program plan to promote high standards of conduct for the state's hunters. This program includes a strong hunter ethics emphasis and hunter skills requirement, and requires hunters in the program to participate in voluntary work with public or private landowners or wildlife groups in wildlife-related projects. The Advanced Hunter Education Program is being promoted by seeking new hunting opportunities which are provided to those hunters who have received their Advanced Hunter Education certification. Private land-



owners are encouraged to open lands for hunting activities to those hunters holding the Advanced Hunter Education certification. The Commission hopes this additional training will help to sensitize sports persons to landowner problems and concerns, and lead to more hunting opportunity on private land for the sports men and women of the state.

- In addition, the Commission approved this year the first Private Lands Wildlife Management Area hunting program, after making significant changes to the program in response to public input. This pilot program incorporates some public (non-fee entry) hunter opportunity, and requires habitat enhancement to private lands. The Advanced Hunter Education Program is incorporated into this pilot project as well. It is hoped the program will lead to increasing wildlife recreation opportunities and wildlife habitat preservation and enhancement.
- Close monitoring of several species has allowed an increase in hunting opportunities for 1992; these species include cougar, wild turkey and mountain sheep.
- Fishing seasons for two years were set by the Commission in the fall of 1991. This fishing regulations package was preceded by a new and expanded public input process implemented by the agency and Commission which resulted in far greater public comment. Numerous changes from the original proposals were made in response to the volumes of public comment received. New fishing opportunity included additions to quality waters management and expanded seasons on many rivers and lakes. As noted, seasons were limited and in some cases closed for steelhead in some rivers and river stretches in response to decreasing wild steelhead runs. New emphasis is being put on preservation of wild fish runs throughout the state of Washington for the long-term enjoyment of future anglers. Low water levels and conflicts with consumptive uses threaten fish populations in several significant water bodies and inhibit operations of several Department hatcheries.
- The Department continues to conduct a very strong nongame program. Several habitat enhancement projects for nongame species were begun by the Depart-



ment which will improve wildlife observation opportunities. The urban wildlife program continues its popularity, including strong interest in backyard wildlife demonstration projects. Volunteer wildlife enthusiasts assist the Department in conducting many nongame species and habitat surveys throughout the state. Several new wildlife interpretive sites are being planned, and cooperative funding is being pursued.

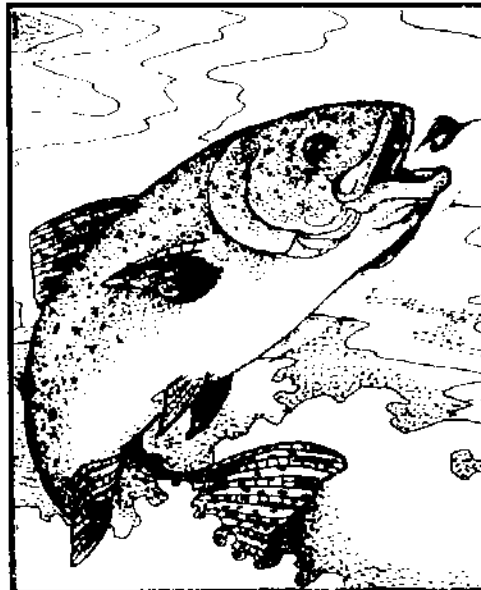
## Progress Toward Meeting Goals and Objectives

The Commission is charged with setting goals, policies and objectives to guide Department budget and program priorities, and to set direction for the planning process. Goals, policies and objectives are purposefully aggressive but are meant to be ultimately attainable. Measurable objectives are adopted as steps to attaining the basic goals. The Commission reviews Department progress on these measurable objectives, and also consistency of Department programs and plans with the adopted goals and policies.

### Wildlife Management:

The agency's Commercialization Task Force has made great progress toward defining uses of wildlife which are abusive or inappropriate commercialization. The agency has

failed to require the removal of wildlife from areas surrounded by impassible fences to allow them to roam free. Many field personnel have made great strides in identifying major migratory corridors. The Fisheries Management Division has adopted game fish management principles to protect native fish species and wild runs and to reassess hatchery fish introduction in waters

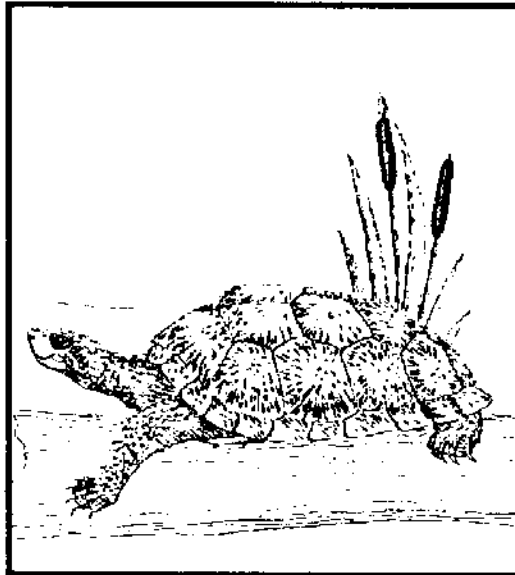




with significant native wild fish populations. Great progress has been made toward protecting and restoring many threatened and endangered species. Additional monitoring is needed for wildlife species in many areas.

### **Enforcement:**

Enforcement capabilities of the Department have been increased, although budget restraints mandate continuation of vacancy management for many enforcement positions. Undercover operations and emphasis teams have had a visible impact on commercial wildlife poaching operations.



### **Recreation:**

Recreational opportunities are continuously under review. Baseline data on demands for wildlife-associated recreation was developed through the Budget and Revenue Review Committee Report. The agency needs to review and validate the information and begin developing objectives to meet these demands. The Department's nongame program has taken some large steps to increase wildlife appreciation opportunities in urban areas. More waters have been designated and managed for quality fishing opportunities. Better monitoring of public satisfaction would provide valuable assistance in the regulation setting process. "Quality" hunting opportunities for elk are increasing. The agency should continue to seek quality hunting opportunities for other species.

### **Habitat:**

The Department has made the Priority Habitats and Species Program a high priority in this biennium, making major progress toward the long-held Commission objective of statewide habitat inventory. The program needs sufficient funding to expand its inclusion to all major habitat types; this information is crucial to provide input to the land use planning and growth management processes and to seek protection of critical habitat areas. The agency has done an excel-



lent job in developing the oil and toxic substance spill plan. A similar effort is needed for severe drought conditions. Grazing policies on Department-controlled lands have been revised for greater habitat management.

### **Coordinated Management:**

The Timber, Fish and Wildlife Program continues to be successful, and the Department has established better lines of communication with other public land management agencies to encourage elevation of wildlife concerns in their land management programs. With the Director now a cabinet member, communication and cooperation with other state agencies is greatly improved. Staffing limitations have limited the input on regional forest plans and to county land use decisions. Input can be given only as time permits, without comprehensive and coordinated analysis of proposals which will collectively have a significant impact on wildlife habitat. Some landowner relations programs, including Advanced Hunter Education and Private Lands Wildlife Management Area programs, have been implemented on a test basis, to seek stronger consideration of wildlife needs on private lands.

### **Information and Education**

The Information and Education Division has expanded public media use to disseminate information on Department activities and wildlife issues. Better communication with the state's sports men and women would help to create a strong support base for wildlife issues and to promote understanding of Department policies and decisions. Sports clubs have a strong voice in the public media and provide a good forum for interchange and explanation of issues and directions. Public education programs on wildlife and environmental issues are not receiving priority support by the Department. Legislation needs to be pursued to require mandatory hunter education for first-time hunting license buyers.

### **Funding**

The Department is pursuing a study of the economic value of wildlife and wildlife recreation, to elevate the status of wildlife issues, and their support in new forums including local business communities. The funding of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program is a major step toward securing key wildlife habitats. Funds for maintenance and capital facilities must be assured. General Fund monies have

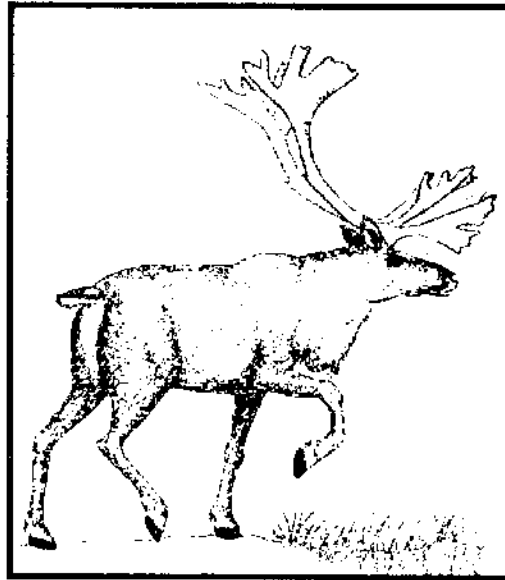


not increased as originally conceived, and the general public still does not bear its fair share of the cost of wildlife management.

## **Agency Management**

Agency organization has been improved, and systematically reviewed. Implementation of a zero-based budgeting process in the last budget cycle involved public and Commission input and participation and helped greatly to clarify agency and division priority programs.

Centralized management has improved program accountability and allowed implementation of statewide policies and priorities. Changing lines of authority are clearly announced through organization charts. The agency and Commission need to commence a joint long-range planning endeavor. The agency needs to establish a formal



procedure for periodic review of its own achievement of Commission goals, policies and objectives, to ensure ongoing consistency of programs, plans and budgets with these GPO's. A centralized filing system and computer data base with system-wide capability have been prioritized by the Commission each year since 1987 but have not yet been implemented by the agency. The agency must establish this as a high-level priority. Progress is being made in development of professional and public relations skills for all employees; these skills should continue to be addressed.

## **Other Commission Action Highlights**

- The Commission initiated a media outreach program in 1991 with the help of the Department's Information and





Education Division. Commissioners have participated in a number of radio talk shows to discuss and answer questions on fish and wildlife issues, and have contributed articles to various state newspapers and publications. Commissioners continue to attend and address numerous and varied wildlife and sports group meetings. Special meetings have been held with southeast Washington pheasant hunters and landowners, in

Ellensburg with archery elk hunters and local landowners, in Forks with concerned steelhead fishers, and in Wenatchee with game farm operators. The Commission takes seriously its role as the Department's link to the public of our state, and continually seeks better and additional avenues to provide that link.

- This spring, the Commission adopted several regulation changes and repealed a few other regulations, in response to the recommendations of the Taxidermy Task Force created by the Commission several years ago. The Commission hopes that the improved communication between the state's taxidermists and the agency will continue. To this end, the agency has provided designated agency personnel for responding to the taxidermy industry's concerns and questions.
- Commissioners have participated in the study and discussion of the Endangered Species Act with Commissioners of other Western States in the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA). The Commission participated in a WAFWA resolution to implore the U.S. Congress to keep intact the intent, integrity, and conservation purposes of the Endangered Species Act.



# On the Horizon

Immediate issues facing the Department in the coming year include the following:

- The Department will once again seek legislative passage of the Interstate Wildlife Violators Compact. This important legislation would bring the Department together with other western states to help curb poaching activity by refusing hunting and fishing privileges to convicted violators in other states.
- The Department is recognizing the true extent of its responsibility for the management of all wildlife species. This responsibility, a legislative mandate, necessitates a funding base spread across all of our state's citizens. The agency and Commission will continue to explore avenues to achieve a consistent and broad funding base to meet the Department's wide responsibilities of protection and perpetuation of all of our wildlife species.
- Wildlife damage claims continue to rise across the state, accelerated by continued habitat conversion through development and agriculture. The legitimacy of the state being responsible for damage from wild animals is an on-going debate. Payment of these wildlife damage claims comes from pockets of the hunters and fishers, despite the broad public of this state who enjoy and want protected our state's wildlife populations. This issue will not diminish in the next few years.





- Compliance with the Growth Management Act has significantly increased the demand for specific information on significant wildlife habitats from local jurisdictions. The Department's Priority Habitats and Species Program must expand to meet this demand. Identification of crucial habitats, migration corridors, breeding areas, etc., can lead to their protection by local jurisdiction in the zoning and development regulation process. This identification and protection requires both the information base and ongoing communication between the agency and the local governments, and a significant commitment of staff time and Department funds. The next biennium is crucial in this process as Growth Management deadlines to local governments approach, and adequate funding to provide these necessary services must be secured by the Department.



- The Budget and Revenue Review Committee (BRRRC) found that Washington State is perilously close to a wildlife disaster. The findings of the BRRRC must be communicated to and understood by the public, the legislature, and the Executive Branch. The public, the legislature, and the Governor's Office must accept the responsibility for establishing an adequate funding base

for Washington's wildlife. The only measure of success or failure is the quantity and quality of wildlife and wildlife habitat that are available for this and future generations of the people of the state of Washington.





Washington  
Department of  
Wildlife

The Washington Department of Wildlife will provide equal opportunities to all potential and existing employees without regard to race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability, or Vietnam Era Veteran's status.

The department receives Federal Aid for fish and wildlife restoration.

The department is subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin or handicap. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any department program, activity, or facility, or if you want further information about Title VI or Section 504, write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240, or Washington Department of Wildlife, 600 Capitol Way N, Olympia WA 98501-1091.





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